

St. Andrew the Apostle LSAP Reflection

St. Andrew the Apostle Parish

St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn NY, is one of the youngest and smallest parishes in the Brooklyn/Queens Diocese, just celebrating its 50th year and described by one pastor as, “Good News for Bay Ridge.” The physical plant of the parish consists of a parish house and church; St. Andrew’s has never had a parochial school. Our parishioners can be characterized as having varied economic means ranging from working class to middle class. We are enriched by having a diverse congregation with a small but vibrant Spanish-speaking community.

Our mission statement is:

“St. Andrew’s Parish is a community that is centered in Jesus, gathers in worship, witnesses the Gospel, and ministers to the spiritual and material needs of the people.”

Our mission is carried out through our Liturgical Ministers, our CCD Program, St. Vincent de Paul Outreach, our support for our sister city, San Andres, in Guatemala, Care for Creation Ministry, the Prayer Network, the WAY (What About You?) Ministry, Women’s Spirituality Group, Jornada Youth Group, Communion and Liberation, Book Club, and Library.



Care for Creation Ministry at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish.

St. Andrew's Parish has a sign in English and Spanish on the parish grounds, indicating that we are A Care for Creation Parish.

The St. Andrew the Apostle Care for Creation Ministry began in the spring of 2020 as a capstone project for parishioner Tom Hinchey's *Laudato Si'* Animator Training.

With support from the Pastor, the Parish Council, and the Director of Religious Education, the core group of the ministry plans activities for the parish which align with *Laudato Si'*. We are affiliated with the Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement and with a working group whose aim is to promote *Laudato Si'* in the entire diocese.

Our mission statement is as follows:

The Care for Creation Ministry is inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* (*On Care for Our Common Home*). Using the See-Judge-Act paradigm, this ministry provides resources for parishioners to reflect on God's Creation; promotes discussion of Church teachings regarding the call to protect Earth and its living creatures; and works to make sure that St. Andrew the Apostle Parish observes ecologically-sound practices while bringing the message of *Laudato Si'* to the larger community.



How We Respond to the Cry of the Earth.

For the past year, the St. Andrew's Care for Creation Ministry Team has been trying to understand how each of us can leave a lighter footprint on the Earth and to help our fellow parishioners do the same.


Members, along with eager youth and parent volunteers from the Religious Education Program, have maintained and enhanced the church garden, including growing eggplants, basil, and tomatoes. We sought out ways that the community can conserve energy and avoid waste. With the help of the parish staff, we made recycling easier by using well-marked containers and showing up at parish events to help parishioners navigate the new system. The Care for Creation Ministry has promoted composting, recycling, cleanup activities at Owl's Head Park, and parish garden planting by hosting or spreading the word about community or parish events. There is an annual Blessing of the Animals on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Our goal is to be mindful of caring for the Earth as we live out our lives as parishioners of St. Andrew's.



How We Respond to the Cry of the Poor.

St. Andrew's Parish has always been a community that is serious about issues of social justice. All people, having the right to lives of dignity and free from poverty, have been part of the parish conversation. St. Andrew's hosts a St. Vincent de Paul food pantry and clothing truck drive. It supports San Andres, a sister parish in Guatemala. Fair Trade products such as coffee, tea, and chocolate are sold. To continue the tradition, the Care for Creation Ministry looks at ways of putting a spotlight on issues of unlimited levels of consumption, as well as concern for the poor and vulnerable, in relation to responsible ways of caring for the Earth.

Using the church bulletin and webpage, suggestions to avoid food waste, to be mindful and informed when buying products, and to reduce overconsumption are published. Meatless recipes were collected and disseminated as a prelude to our online Lenten Simple Supper Prayer Service. Care for others and of the whole of creation are important core values that, when woven together, inspire our community to action.




ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE
CARE FOR CREATION

May 24 will mark the sixth anniversary of the publication of Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. Laudato Si', paragraph 211: "There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions...avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings."

CARE FOR CREATION

Meatless meals are easy! Try making a grain bowl. Start by cooking up some grains (rice, farro, wheat berries, quinoa) or legumes such as lentils, beans or chickpeas. Layer your grain(s) in a bowl with raw or cooked veggies, cheese, hard boiled eggs, and your favorite sauce. Presto--a meal! Your grain bowl can be served hot or cold.



How We Practice Ecological Economics.

The fundamental premise of ecological economics is that the economic system is embedded within a social system which is, in turn, embedded within an ecological system (the biosphere).

The three interrelated goals of ecological economics are sustainable scale, fair distribution, and efficient allocation. All three of these contribute to human well-being and sustainability. Given that cities account for 70-80% of global economic activity and associated resource use, emissions, and waste, they are central to finding solutions to the challenge of sustainability.

The Care for Creation Ministry seeks to ensure that the economic activity of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish is on a scale that is sustainable not only in this current year, but for the years to come. We do this by monitoring the amount of money expended on gas, water, electricity; and how much emissions and waste are produced by the parish in the use of these resources.

How We Move Toward Adopting Sustainable Lifestyles.

The Care for Creation Ministry has emphasized environmental action through five themes: Waste Not; Eat Green and Lower Your Carbon Footprint; Reduce Your Meat Consumption—Especially Beef; Conserve Water; and Know How Your Food Is Produced.

Recipes for meatless meals have been encouraged during the Lenten Season.

We have promoted the Composting Programs at our neighboring Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church and in the Greenmarket held from April to November in the Walgreens Parking Lot; the Electronics Recycling Program in the St. Anselm's Parking Lot; and the Christmas Tree Mulching Program in Owl's Head Park.



How We Practice Ecological Education.

Ecological education at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish within *Laudato Si'* starts with educating our parishioners' awareness that each one of us shares in and is responsible for the natural environment with which we have been gifted by God. We believe that our parish family does not intentionally harm the environment. Rather, it needs to be made aware of the simple ways that God's gift to us can be preserved, can be made whole again where it has been jeopardized, and can flourish for ourselves and future generations to experience and enjoy. Within this education of awareness, we assist members of our parish and community to appreciate environmental concerns. We endeavor to develop the tools, many of which are simple, to work together toward solutions that benefit all living creatures, human and animal alike.

In terms of what this looks like in practice, our Faith Formation Program has crafted Care for Creation lessons for our students and is having an essay contest in honor of *Laudato Si'* Week for CCD students in our Deanery to give them agency in expressing what it means to them to care for the gift of God's creation. The contest provides for the inclusion of neurodiverse students who may express themselves through drawing or painting. A composting table at Kids' Day was provided so that students could demonstrate and experience how their actions benefit our environment. In our weekly parish bulletins, we provide educational messages on the Care for Creation in English and Spanish. Thus, our entire congregation has the opportunity, not only to read about, but to joyfully participate in a variety of activities as we each increase our knowledge and preservation of the gift of creation that has been so freely and lovingly bestowed on us.

Ecological education does not only consist of knowledge regarding our natural surroundings. It consists of learning about diversity in its many forms. We need to address human diversity through true multicultural education and inclusive practices. They are based on acceptance of neurodiversity as just another part of human diversity, rather than through the lens of ableism and racism that often leads to



How We Practice Ecological Spirituality.

The Care for Creation Ministry Team has sponsored spiritual activities to enhance parishioners' awareness of *Laudato Si'*. A Season of Creation Mass was celebrated, along with a Garden Blessing Prayer/Song Service in front of the statue of St. Fiacre. To celebrate Earth Day, a Prayer Service was conducted after Sunday Mass.

Two online Lenten Simple Suppers were held. Participants then made individual donations to their parish's food pantries. For Advent, the Care for Creation Ministry Team has posted prayers in gratitude for the season in the St. Andrew's Parish Gathering Space.

Weekly notices with environmental themes are prepared and emailed to the Catholic Churches in our Deanery and local Christian Churches for publication.

The Care for Creation Ministry Team works closely with the Religious Education Director to communicate volunteer opportunities for the CCD students to clean up the St. Andrew's Parish Grounds and Owl's Head Park. We have suggested ecologically-themed activities for students such as an Essay Contest and Banners for the Parish's Fence for Earth Day and the Kids' Table at the Parish's Block Party Event.

In order to give parishioners a chance to commune with nature, an outdoor tour of the Narrows Botanical Gardens was scheduled. We have tapped into parishioners' creativity by encouraging a nature photo contest.



How We Facilitate Community Resilience and Empowerment.

The Care for Creation Ministry Team is in the process of working with other faith communities in addressing the ecological health needs of the Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, neighborhood.

This will take the form of advocating with our elected officials for legislation and funding to address the ecological needs and concerns shared by the community. Petition writing and other forms of direct action will be developed.

We also are networking with the Metro New York Catholic Climate and the *Laudato Si'* Movements to gain and share ideas.

Listening to the needs of the community, identifying how best to address these needs, and taking direct action will all be part of facilitating Community Resilience and Empowerment.

